

Book review

Practical paediatric respiratory medicine

M. Silverman, C.L. O'Callaghan. Price: £39.50. ISBN: 0 340 74126 (PB).

Respiratory illness is extremely frequently occurring in infancy and childhood. It is the commonest cause of admission to hospital for this age-group. In summer approximately 30% of referrals by general practitioners to paediatricians is due to a respiratory problem which increases to approximately 50% in the winter. The impact of this high incidence on children's development in general may be one of the reasons that many textbooks on paediatric respiratory diseases have been published. Most textbooks, however, focus on specific disease entities from which general symptomatology may be deduced.

The editors of the new book '*Practical Paediatric Respiratory Medicine*' state in their first chapter that a great discrepancy exists between the way in which clinical practice is conducted and the way most textbooks structure their learning material. Most textbooks provide many details about a specific disease, its pathophysiology and its management, without paying much attention to the interpretation of 'normal' symptoms like coughing and wheezing, and to the practical skills of management of these particular problems.

Silverman and O'Callaghan from the Child Health department of Leicester University, UK, in collaboration with a large number of specialists in the respiratory paediatric field from their hospital and some from beyond have brought together their personal view and approach of clinical symptoms and signs of respiratory disease in childhood which paediatricians and general practitioners often meet in everyday practice. They divide the book into two parts. In part one—Clinical measurement and clinical assessment—the authors start with an original description of symptoms and signs and what particular symptoms such as coughing, wheezing, stridor, etc. mean for everyday practice without going into great detail about the diseases which may be diagnosed out of these symptoms. Each chapter is clearly illustrated with clinical case studies as separate vignettes. Carefully composed tables form easy and quick references for everyday practice. In the same way diagnostic procedures are nicely and shortly described. The authors and the publisher have done their utmost to show the specific

details of radiological investigations, bronchoalveolar lavage specimens and laryngoscopic and bronchoscopic pictures as clearly as possible. These would have been nicer in colour-print; however, colour prints might have been overdone within the design of the book.

The subject discussed in part two of the book is clinical management. In the first place hospital-focused subjects like emergency procedures, ventilatory support, tracheostomy and chest drains are clearly described and illustrated to give the interested readers some detailed background information on these specialised procedures. Specialists in these fields may enjoy the way in which practical skills are shown and described. In the second place more general subjects like inhalation therapy and oxygen treatment get their specific attention to make the readers aware of all kind of practical difficulties in using these procedures at home and in hospital.

Fortunately, psychosocial issues in conjunction with respiratory diseases are taken notice of in both parts of the book. Improvement of the symptoms does not mean a better quality of life, especially not in chronic disease. It is important to know in which way disease not only effects the physical function but also the life-style and emotional well-being of children and their families involved. Disease has impact on their behaviour and play. Chronically ill children must learn to be compliant and adhere to necessary prescribed treatment and in which way self-management plans may be composed.

In conclusion, '*Practical paediatric respiratory medicine*' is a very useful complementary book to many textbooks on respiratory diseases. Readers are encouraged to use the lessons of the book in their own practice. On the other hand, they are also stimulated to look for more detailed descriptions and pictures of specific subjects if required. Indeed, the book will provide trainee paediatricians and respiratory physicians, and children's nurses in training, with invaluable advice and support when tackling the clinical problems of everyday practice, as stated on the back cover. Also for students and even for paediatric pulmonologists it may be of great interest to use as a practical tool in the clinical setting.

J. van der Laag
*Paediatric pulmonologist, CF-center,
University Medical Centre Utrecht, Utrecht,
The Netherlands*